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Army Discloses Man Died In Drug Test It Sponsored

By JOSEPH B. TREASTER

The Army disclosed yesterday that a 42-year-old patient at the New York State Psychiatric Institute died 22 years ago in an Army-sponsored experiment with hallucinogenic drugs.

It was the first death reported by the military in experiments with mind-altering drugs that ran from the early nineteen-fifties until about three weeks ago and included nearly 4,000 subjects.

The Army identified the patient as Harold Blauer of Locust Valley, L. I. One of Mr. Blauer's two daughters, Elizabeth Barrett, a young widow who lives in Manhattan, said that her father had been a professional tennis player.

The Army said that the patient had been given the drug in a series of five tests, conducted by civilians working under an Army contract with the institute and involving various derivatives of the drug mescaline, over a 29-day period. The first four tests, the Army said, produced mild or no effects. But, the Army continued, "on the fifth test, early in January, 1953, the patient died, about 2½ hours after receiving an injection of a mescaline derivative."

Miss Barrett said that although she was only 13 years old at the time, she had been told by her mother that the drug her father had received was LSD. She said that she had also seen documents indicating this.

She said that she had learned of the Army's involvement in the experiments in a meeting with three officers in civilian clothes. She said that she did not believe their assertion that the drug had been given to her father for "diagnostic" purpose.

She said that her father had

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"absolutely not" volunteered to participate in a drug experiment, and that he had said "he didn't like" the drug he had been given.

Miss Barrett said that she had been told her father received the fatal drug dose on a Thursday and was to have been discharged on Friday, Jan. 9, 1953.

She said that she had been told that a resident had entered her father's room and said that he was going to administer a drug, and that her father replied, "I don't need any more medication. I'm going home tomorrow. I'm being discharged. I'm all better."

But, she said, the resident was quoted as saying, "You have to have it. The doctor ordered it." Later that day, she said, she and the rest of the family learned of his death.

Dr. Sidney Malitz, the acting director of the New York State Psychiatric Institute, at 722 West 168th Street, who was not at the institute when the experiments were conducted, said, "As far ts we know, permission was obtained voluntarily" from the subject.

But, he said, "I'm sure he was not told all the ramifications of the drug. There was a feeling in those days if a patient was told too much about a drug it might influence the experiment. Today, that couldn't happen. There would be much greater disclosure of all the pros and cons of the medication."

Miss Barrett said that her mother had sued the State of New York for her father's death and settled out of court for, she thought, $13,000.

The Army gave the cause of death as a "cardiovascular collapse," or heart attack.

Dr. Sidney Malitz, the acting director of the New York State Psychiatric Institute at 722 West 168th Street, said that records showed the patient "developed breathing difficulties and heart irrigularities and suddenly stopped breathing and expired."

"Every effort was made to revive him, but this was unsuccessful," he added.

Both the Police Department and the Medical Examiner's office said that it would take some time for them to check their files to see if they had records on the case.

Dr. Malitz said that the principal investigators in the Army-sponsored experiments, Dr. Paul Hoch, who eventually became the State Commissioner of Mental Hygiene, and Dr. Carney Landis had died more than 10 years ago. The Army said that it did not have the contract numbers or other details of the work.

But representative Thomas J. Downey, a Deocrat of Suffolk County, who has been critical of the Governent's drng experiments, said that the Army paid for two experiments with psychochemical drugs on humans at the New York State Psychiatric Institnte between Oct. 9, 1951, and Feb. 28, 1953. The total expenditure, he said, was $32,251.90.

The Rockefeller Report

The Government's experiments on humans with mind-altering drugs was disclosed in June in a report by the Rockefeller commission, which investigated allegations of illegal domestic activity by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The commission said in its report that a civilian biochemist working for the Army, later identified as Frank R. Olson, had surreptitiously been given LSD and subsequently plunged to his death from a 10th-story hotel window in Manhattan.

Numerous queries from the press and the public followed the publication of the Rockefeller commission report, and the military, after initially refusing to comment, gradually disclosed a number of drug expericents that it had been conducting.

Until yesterday, the Army had said that it knew of no deaths or an yserious reactions in the drug experiments that it conducted as the principal investigator in this area for the Department of Defense.

In a meeting yesterday morning with newsmen in his Pentagon office, Joseph Laitin, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, said that a ile disclosing the death in the Army-sponsored experiments had been discovered among historical records of the Biomedical Laboratory at the Edgewood Arsenal, in Maryland, where most of the Army's drug experiments were carried out.

He said that the file had been tuned up by investigators who had been looking into the Army's experiments with humans since about three weeks ago, when the experiments were suspended.